

THE

RETIRED PENITENT,

A

P O E M.

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BY URSULA IVISON.

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L O N D O N:

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## *The Authorefs's Preface and Address.*

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**I**Nexperienced in every mode of Publication, I hope the *candid* reader will excuse any inaccuracy he may meet with from a Female Pen, in this little Essay, written some years since, in consequence of perusing a book of Dr. Young's, intituled, the "*Centaur not fabulous.*" Struck with the beauty of the language, and force of the ideas, and having a mind naturally turned to serious subjects, I sat down to paraphrase a part of this inimitable Poem, which I have called the **RETIRED PENITENT**, according to the title already given by the celebrated Author to that part of his book from whence the thought was taken.

Though I have ever been flattered by  
my friends, in the earlier part of life,

A 2

upon

upon every trifling production, I never yet durst venture to submit any *one* to the opinion of a generous Public, nor should I now have been prevailed on so to do, were I not fully persuaded, that the sentiments contained in the following Pages are so just, that altho it is not improbable but I may be a loser by this Essay, it is nevertheless possible, they may strike with conviction some one, who will condescend to give them a fair perusal; and for this presumption, I hope I may stand excused from the imputation of unbecoming vanity, as I do not send them forth in my own strength, the sentiments being chiefly taken from a person of known, and experienced credibility.

If I am fortunate enough to meet with the approbation of some serious disposed persons, I shall think myself fully repaid  
for



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for all the little anxieties of this my first  
Publication, and gratefully acknowledge  
their countenance as a favor conferred

On their obliged

Humble Servant,

URSULA IVISON.



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T H E  
*RETIRED PENITENT.*

---

I N the few moments, which he has to spare,  
While worn by sickness, and oppress'd by care,  
He thus exclaims, all gracious Heaven!  
For ever blest be th' indulgence given  
For ever blest'd, to me of human race,  
The vilest sinner; but such are sav'd by Grace.  
Had not thy goodness plann'd this calm recess,  
And turn'd my heart its follies to confess;  
Where had I been! an Alien to Thy Name!  
Immers'd in guilt, iniquity, and shame:  
I KNEW THEE NOT; or, what is worse by far,  
Against thy precepts wag'd continual war;  
With daring arrogance I took the field,  
Passion my guide, and folly all my shield,  
Ah! whence these gentle terms so ill applied!  
Guilt was my armour, every lust my guide,

Let

Let me erase them with conviction's pen,  
 Nor e'er so mildly mention VICE again.  
 When I the retrospect of life pursue,  
 Its horrors then are open to my view;  
 Earth holds her peace; her voice is heard no more;  
 Her once delusive voice, is wild uproar;  
 Heav'n's softer whispers to my soul conveys  
 The pressing dangers, which attend her ways.  
 In terms like these she speaks, "rash youth beware,  
 In pleasures beaten path lies every snare;  
 Too oft by Thee her foot-steps have been trod,  
 Learn hence to shun them, and ADORE THY GOD;  
 Let thy converted heart confess His power,  
 And seek its refuge, e'er the trying hour.  
 Give him full confidence, and be received;  
 NONE EVER TRUSTED YET AND WERE DECEIVED."  
 Amazing goodness! such Thy voice was heard!  
 And peace, and mercy join'd the sacred word:  
 And shall the culprit thou inclin'd to spare,  
 Live still in guilt, nor those sweet accents hear,  
Whose



Whose sound seraphic vibrate to the soul,  
 Vibrate in harmony, that would controul,  
 Each hateful passion of the human breast,  
 Each purposed sin, and *lull* its fears to rest,  
 Forbid it reason! O forbid it Heav'n!  
 Can the condemn'd refuse to be forgiv'n!  
 Already roused, my own lost state I feel,  
 Already conscience makes her *just appeal*;  
 Such monstrous crimes successive rise to view  
 That every hour presents me something new;  
 Ingratitude to THEE, of GUILT the worst,  
 IMPIOUS INGRATITUDE appears the first.  
 Pride, ERRING PRIDE, misguiding fault of youth,  
 Led me to this, and drew me from the truth.  
 Philosophy VAIN SCIENCE OF THE VAIN!  
 Deceitful, light chimera of the brain,  
 Taught me to deviate from thy clearer light,  
 And dancing meteors oft deceiv'd my sight.  
 'Till in the search of nature's various course,  
 I lost the author, lost the FIRST GREAT SOURCE

OF EVERY ATOM, whom I wish'd to trace,  
 And wildly talk'd, of vacuum, chance, and space.  
 Bewilder'd thus, ANNIHILATION'S PLAN,  
*So falsely taught, to poor deluded man,*  
 Was all my theme, 'twas MERCY to my soul,  
 Thus plung'd in guilt, impatient of controul.  
 Advice was hateful, for I scorned the friend,  
 Whose mode of thinking did not thither tend.  
 Here let me stop; here let me pause awhile,  
 And think how much I studied to beguile  
 Such watchful care; how earnest to deceive,  
 With dangerous tenets all, who would receive  
 The subtle poison from my tainted breath,  
 Whose words infectious spoke eternal Death.  
 Fool that I was! how widely have I stray'd!  
 From reason's path! how madly disobey'd  
 The voice of conscience, Heaven's vicegerent here!  
 Whilst worldly sounds possessed my ravish'd ear.  
 Folly kept beating; pleasure fyren sung;  
 And on the lip of youth persuasion hung;  
 I listen'd,—follow'd,—heard,—and was undone. }  
 Ah!

Ah! in such pleasures what can thought devise,  
 That sober reason must not e'er despise!  
 'Tis reason's Death, reason the guide of man,  
 And with it dies, FELICITY'S BEST PLAN;  
 The cloud now breaks, which wrapt me all in night  
 And Heaven permits a dawning ray of light;  
 Look round my soul, enlarg'd are all thy pow'rs,  
 Enjoy the priv'lege of these happy hours;  
 Look round! and while thou view'st IMMENSITY  
 What to the world is such a thing as Thee?  
 A fly a gnat upon the water's face,  
 A crawling worm upon the globe's wide space;  
 Whose life's a vapour; and whose pleasure shade,  
 His rest a moment, and those shadows fade;  
 E'en while the dial marks the sitting sun,  
 The trifling business of his life is done;  
 And DEATH the message of ETERNAL FATE,  
 On ONE IMPORTANT MOMENT MUST AWAIT.  
 Say, shall a moment, shadow, vapor claim,  
 All my attention, all my wish and aim!

To revel here shall riot be the plan,  
 Ah ! no ! a change of nature is began;  
 An angel calls, commissioned from above,  
 With token bright of universal love!  
 To my torn heart he speaks, speaks to amend,  
 Shall I not listen to so kind a friend ?  
 Or shall I yet th' auspicious hour delay!  
 Parley with heav'n, and ask another day !  
 Should he not call again, tremendous thought !  
 E'er to the judgment seat my soul is brought,  
 E'er at thy throne the trembling culprit stands,  
 And justice dooms me far from mercy's hands,  
 Where then is hope, if judgment is began!  
 And what thy state, poor miserable man!  
 Man, desperate man, impatient in his mind,  
 Launches in storms ! and fails with every wind !  
 With hands untaught, th' unskilful pilot steers,  
 And very soon the shatter'd wreck appears.  
 Tost on the surface of the foaming wave,  
 To every Passion is his soul a slave;

Harrafs'd



Harrafs'd, infatiate still his every joy;  
 With trifles pleas'd, with trifles that destroy:  
 So stands the reckoning life's vain pleasures cost;  
 In which pursuit, all happiness is lost.  
 Who e'er from God departs, nor heeds his call,  
 In ruin sinks; and ah! how great the fall.  
 Thus sunk, and prostrate, I my Voice would raise,  
 Break thou the charm, and purify my ways;  
 Ah! why this stupor, this oppressive load,  
 When e'er I look to thy divine abode?  
 Teach me to rise, since thou *alone* canst teach,  
 And give me still, those wish'd for heights to reach,  
 Where sin and sorrow, from the heart recede  
 And where from anxious care, the mind is freed.  
 There may I learn to soar with ardent wing,  
 And on THEE rest, my GOD,—my GUIDE,—my  
 For want of this I feel I'm not the same [KING.  
 As man first was, when from thy hands he came;  
 This heart rebellious from thy laws has turn'd,  
 Redeeming grace, and offer'd pardon, spurn'd,  
 Slept

Slept on a precipice ! and dream'd of what !  
 Of joys and pleasure, but I found them not.  
 In wild absurdity, to worldlings given,  
 Convicted, fin'd, yet hop'd to be forgiven ;—  
 And shall I not ?— does mercy hide its head ?  
 Does not the KING OF MERCY interceed ?  
 ETERNAL GOODNESS has the promise made,  
 ETERNAL LOVE the debt of sin has paid.  
 Yea; tho' a direful vengeance may have frown'd  
 Tho' bursting thunders, may have roll'd around  
 And livid lightnings shew'd the gulf profound. }  
 Awak'd by thee! triumphant songs I'll raise !  
 And joy to celebrate sweet mercy's praise,  
 That free redemption then let sinners share,  
 The BRIGHTEST GEM, OMNIPOTENCE can wear.  
 If I had died e'er mercy had been sent,  
 Or heaven allow'd me, leisure to repent,  
 E'er to my heart the living witness spoke,  
 And from my captive soul her fetters broke.  
 Where had I been? again the thought will rise!  
 Again I see the *Gulf* before my eyes.

Hence

Hence let the terrors of this conscious breast,  
 That load of guilt, which has my soul oppress'd,  
 Sink deeper yet, and let the awful grave,  
 From which thy goodness snatcht me, speak to save!  
 Speak to my heart with renovating grace,  
 With love, triumphant love, my soul embrace.  
 Where late ambition, avarice, and pride  
 With every hateful lust was seen to hide,  
 May'st thou possess, Omnipotent Supreme,  
 And be henceforth my everlasting theme;  
 Above creation teach a wretch to soar  
 To know Thee here, and knowing to adore.  
 Thou first great cause, from whom all being sprung,  
 On whom creation's ample powers are hung,  
 Of every good the center, and the chief;  
 Tho' passing wonder, not beyond belief;  
 Enough we feel, enough we comprehend  
 To prove thou hast nor origin, nor end.  
 And tho' not present to a mortal eye,  
 No power on earth thy arm may dare defy.

What

What e'er thou art, immensity thy space,  
 Yet clearly seen by faith in every place.  
 Glorious Eternal, Independent God—  
 Myriads on Myriads, who obey thy nod,  
 Angels, Archangels, Seraphim unite  
 To veil thy presence from unholy sight,  
 Yet still so forcibly thou art impress'd  
 That some e'en feel Thee dwelling in their breast,  
 To such as these communion sweet is given,  
 A lively foretaste of a future Heaven.  
 If such thou art, where then can mortals fly?  
 What guilt so secret as t' escape thy eye?  
 Think, O my soul, 'fore whom thou art to plead,  
 Infinitude itself each thought to read. [trace!  
 What height can reach him, and what knowledge  
 Whose footstool's earth wher dwells the fallen race.  
 Does prayer ascend before his sacred throne?  
 And does he gracious make our wants his own?  
 And do we hesitate this gift to use,  
 And all his patient warnings still abuse?



In misery oft we lift our eyes to Thee,  
 And would be thine, or nothing beg to be;  
 And does that prayer succeed, all gracious Heaven!  
 Is fate revers'd? and is the wretch forgiven?  
 Can all like me the same attention claim?  
 Me, who so oft traduc'd thy sacred name,  
 Yet spar'd to see FOR ME my Saviour dy'd,  
 To set the portals of his mansions wide.  
 Blush harden'd sinner at that Saviour's love,  
 And at this portrait ev'ry doubt remove!  
 While I recount the fearful terrors past,  
 Think as thou read'st, this hour may be thy last.  
 Recording Angels now repeat their charge,  
 And give the transcript of thy crimes at large.  
 Yea, e'er thy rising thoughts to Heaven address'd,  
 The trembling accents, on thy tongue's suppress'd,  
 In half form'd sentences may soon expire,  
 And conscience light the everlasting fire.  
 Horror to think a sentence so severe!  
*Self doom'd* ye suffer, will not reason hear?

C

Will

Will she not supplicate the power above,  
 Source of delight and never failing love ?  
 By me, a wretch his goodness has restor'd,  
 May that eternal mercy be ador'd !  
 Can I look back, and see my once lost state,  
 And yet forbear to warn thee of thy fate ?  
 Snatch'd from the grave, whose victim late I lay,  
 As shut for ever from the face of day,  
 I feel for all, and would to all impart  
 The glowing tribute of a grateful heart.  
 Had I been call'd before God's bar to plead,  
 Ah ! with what language could I intercede ?  
 What palliating circumstance produce,  
 That for my numerous crimes were some excuse ?  
 None ; none there was ; for I confess with shame,  
 I was unworthy of a christian's name,  
 Unworthy of the character assum'd,  
 And on my own imagin'd worth presum'd.  
 On that weak basis did my fall begin,  
 And swell'd the measure of each willful sin.

Apostate;—

Apostate ;— hypocrite ;— deceitful ;— vain ;  
 Slave to each lust, I knew not to refrain,  
 But yielded tamely to temptations power;  
 Nay more, I languish'd for th' appointed hour  
 Of some debauch ; and luxury, and wine,  
 In sensual pleasures drown'd each thought divine.  
 Thus day's bright orb withdrew his glorious light  
 To mark the revels of the intemp'rate night.  
 Thankless, and senseless of the bounties given,  
 With daring arrogance I scoff'd at Heaven.  
 This heart unfeeling, still in stupor laid,  
 Declar'd a senseless conscience not afraid,  
 One that ne'er thought of other vain excuse  
 For all thy righteous laws so gross abuse  
 Than fashion gives; thus idly did I plead,  
 When from each just restraint my mind was freed.  
 And here with anguish be the truth confess'd,  
 Blessings impoisoned left the soul unblest'd.  
 Whole years were past; whole years in folly spent;  
 Portions of time, prescribed to repent,

*Unnotic'd fled*; to Heav'n they took their wing,  
 And in my heart have left th' invenom'd sting.  
 How frequent, were the warnings Heav'n THEN  
 As if its int'rest was my soul to save. [ gave,  
 And, Oh! when pale disease before me star'd,  
 My lew'd companions fell, whilst I was spar'd;  
 My friends, my virtuous friends, th' endearing ties  
 Of wife, and Children, all the soul can prize,  
 Torn from my bosom, from my fond embrace,  
 Nor dares my trembling memory retrace  
 The parting hour; I tore my beating breast,  
 Bid Death, in all its triple horrors drest,  
 In mercy strike, and set my soul at rest: }  
 At rest? what rest? Oh! horrid to relate,  
 I fought to forward my eternal fate,  
 Loathing existence, my distracted mind  
 Saw not the lesson providence design'd:  
 Blind as I was, I could not understand  
 That all thy ways in mercy have been plann'd;  
 Nor dost thou e'er our comforts here destroy  
 Unless to fit us for eternal joy.

Prais'd



Prais'd be that mercy ! lauded be that love,  
 That deigned to look with pity from above,  
 On the weak sons of Adam's fallen race  
 And reinspire with vivifying grace  
 This lifeless mass.— REDEMPTION, sacred plan !  
 Struck on the dying soul of sinful man,  
 Fresh rays of light, th' astonish'd world survey'd  
 The judge supreme the sinner's peace had made.  
 Fain would my heart, contemplating the scheme,  
 Fain would it strive to celebrate the theme,  
 Alas ! it sinks unequal to the praise,  
 And only silent adoration pays,  
 For words are weak ; too poor is language found,  
 Angelic beings only can resound,  
 And fitly spread th' eternal truth around. }  
 'Tis thine IMMANUEL, thine alone to send  
 The delegated power that can amend,  
 In distant realms the uninstruct'd to teach,  
 And to the unconverted thine to preach.  
 For ages yet unborn in triumph reign  
 And all the tempter's subtle power restrain,

At

At thy blest word, the heart shall hear the call  
And at thy feet shall Satan's empire fall ;  
All cavils end, vain sectaries shall cease,  
And distant nations sing eternal peace:

*After*

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*After having finished the foregoing Poem, I wished to pourtray the  
Convictions of a Penitent Sinner at the point of Death, in order to  
shew the Divine Mercy towards Mankind in a stronger light; I  
have therefore entitled the subsequent lines*

T H E  
P R A Y E R  
O F A  
D Y I N G P E N I T E N T.

---

ALMIGHTY Lord! eternal God of power!  
O'er ruling principle in every hour!  
Assist my wishes in this awful day,  
And teach a dying sinner how to pray,  
When I in weakness would my prayer address,  
I feel a languor, shameful to confess,  
For mercy crying, to thy Throne would seek,  
Yet find my wants so strong, my words so weak, }  
As seems a just denial to bespeak.       To

To those stupendous heights in vain I look !  
 And deem my Soul, at once, by thee forsook.  
 My spirit sinks, while inwardly she moans,  
 And knows no vent, but supplicating groans.  
 In vain my faltering tongue attempts to raise,  
 Or form those accents, which should speak thy  
 In grateful themes, for thy eternal care, [praise  
 And all the various blessings mortals share ;  
 Each in their kind, descending from above ;  
 But most of all, for that best ACT OF LOVE,  
 Which plann'd Redemption for a fallen race,  
 And freely offer'd them thy saving grace.  
 Fain would my lips this glorious theme renew,  
 I once adoring, held so just and true,  
 Ah! why neglected was that sacred truth,  
 So strongly grafted in my happier youth ?  
 I fear alas! it cannot now be sung,  
 So much I falter, that my guilty tongue  
 Stay'd to its roof, in this her utmost need,  
 Appears as if forbidden to proceed;

Yet



Yet Heav'n, all merciful! forgives the form,  
 If it vouchsafe to hear a dying worm.  
 Alas! like me, how many have refus'd  
 Thy offer'd grace! by present scenes amus'd,  
 How many have by false excuses stay'd  
 Th' important business of their lives delay'd?  
 Perhaps with hearts like mine, o'er aw'd with fear,  
 Now view th' harbinger of Death as near:  
 Without the guide of their eternal friend,  
 Quite unprepar'd the summons to attend:  
 Dark is the prospect of a future world!  
 And for Eternity my sails unfurl'd,  
 Ordain'd to quit, may know my path no more!  
 Till wreck'd for ever on some unknown shore!  
 Dear Lord, look down, in pity bow thine ear,  
 Thou know'st the sorrow of my heart sincere.  
 No other hope, no other trust, have I,  
 Save in the beams of mercy from thine eye;  
 Thy truth, thy power, in humble hope I crave,  
 Thy power, thy truth, can shield me from the grave.

Great God! look down, behold my change so near!  
 O grant acceptance to this humble fear,  
 Vouchsafe my fervent breathings to attend,  
 And give that faith on which I may depend.  
 What tho' in mists I feel my weakened sight,  
 Yet through that dismal gloom a ray of light,  
 By thee commissioned, INFINITELY GOOD!  
 Can, by no POWER of DARKNESS, be withstood.  
 One single ray, once shining on my soul,  
 Shall all such artifice and power controul:  
 Give to my mind, in imag'd hope imprest,  
 The firm sure promise of eternal rest;  
 O grant me faith that promise to embrace:  
 A dying Sinner begs this act of grace.  
 Ah! let not Heaven the urgent prayer refuse!  
 A dying sinner—has—no time to lose.  
 This dreadful hour of suffering to remove,  
 Must be the effort of almighty love.  
 Speed then its passage to a broken heart,  
 E'er from these visual orbs th' leaders start,  
E'er

E'er the same hand, which form'd & gave me breath,  
 Recal that gift, and write my name in Death:  
 'Tis for that cause th' omnipotent supreme,  
 In mercy plann'd *Redemption's glorious scheme*;  
 Gave his own Son lost Sinners souls to save,  
 To snatch them sinking from th' eternal grave.  
 The nails and spear, which peirc'd his hands and side,  
 For such as me a refuge did provide;  
 My growing sins, fast wound around my heart,  
 Did to his suffering soul fresh pangs impart.  
 Such was the pond'rous weight my Savior bore;  
 Look up my soul with wonder and adore!  
 Ah! could no other Sacrifice avail?  
 Sure nature shudders at the awful tale,  
 To think this hardened heart replete with pride,  
 Could e'er refuse *this Saviour* for its guide.  
 Well may it rend its cords at ebbing life,  
 With horror to have held such deadly strife;  
 With conscious guilt, so fully now impress'd,  
 It sinks with anguish in my throbbing breast.

Yet what avails these bitter pangs I feel,  
 Unless this Saviour does himself reveal;  
 Lord cleanse my heart, ah, cleanse its foulest stain,  
 O let me view Thee reconcil'd again.  
 'Tis done;—almighty love has heard my prayer!  
 Almighty love has made my soul its care:  
 Cloath'd with a mantle of his grace I rise,  
 And see my interest in the op'ning skies;  
 But mortal language never can reveal,  
 Half the transporting joys my soul shall feel!  
 Her sins, her sorrows, her distress, then o'er,  
 No sin, no sorrow, can distress her more.  
 Earth claims them, as her heritage in power,  
 And when I quit this earth, I quit her dower:  
 Pleas'd to exchange, for prospects I behold,  
 I leave the miser all his thirst for gold;  
 How ever loath from toys like these to part,  
 They breed a canker, which corrodes the heart.  
 To higher riches, and more sterling worth,  
 I wish their claim, in right of second birth;

To



To flattering youth, the phantoms I have chas'd,  
 The sensual pleasures, which my soul disgrac'd;  
 Sated when found and pall'd upon the taste. }

To wild ambition, as a stay to guide,  
 I leave the frequent checks, which wait on pride,  
 And, to their eager wishes for a name,  
 The vague uncertainty of earthly fame,  
 The breath of mortals, lighter than the air,  
 Ah! who would make SUCH OBJECTS worth their  
 To riper years, and hoary headed age, [care.  
 A retrospect hereafter to engage  
 Their sober thought, the waste of precious time,  
 And clear remembrance of it as a crime.  
 A crime which hangs with such excessive weight,  
 On the last moments of this transient state:  
 It bids me, if I have a thought to spare,  
 To caution others of th' important care.  
 These, and the like mementos thus I leave,  
 In trust and hope, now given to believe,  
 That he who bore my sins, all gracious Heaven!  
 Has said, thy sins, tho' numerous, are forgiven.  
 Whose

Whose sacred promise to the heart reveal'd,  
 With his own blood and righteousness is seal'd !  
 His word immutable in mercy flows,  
 With pow'r supreme, triumphant o'er our woes.  
 Thus then I yield my body to the dust,  
 For who shall dare his promises distrust.

*FINIS.*